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THE FOURTH MAN

AN ORIGINAL COMEDY IN ONE ACT

BY

AUSTIN PHILIPS

AND

EDWARD CECIL

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THE FOURTH MAN



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AN ORIGINAL COMEDY
IN ONE ACT

By

AUSTIN PHILIPS and EDWARD CECIL

ADAPTED FROM AUSTIN PHILIPS'S SHORT
STORY OF THE SAME NAME

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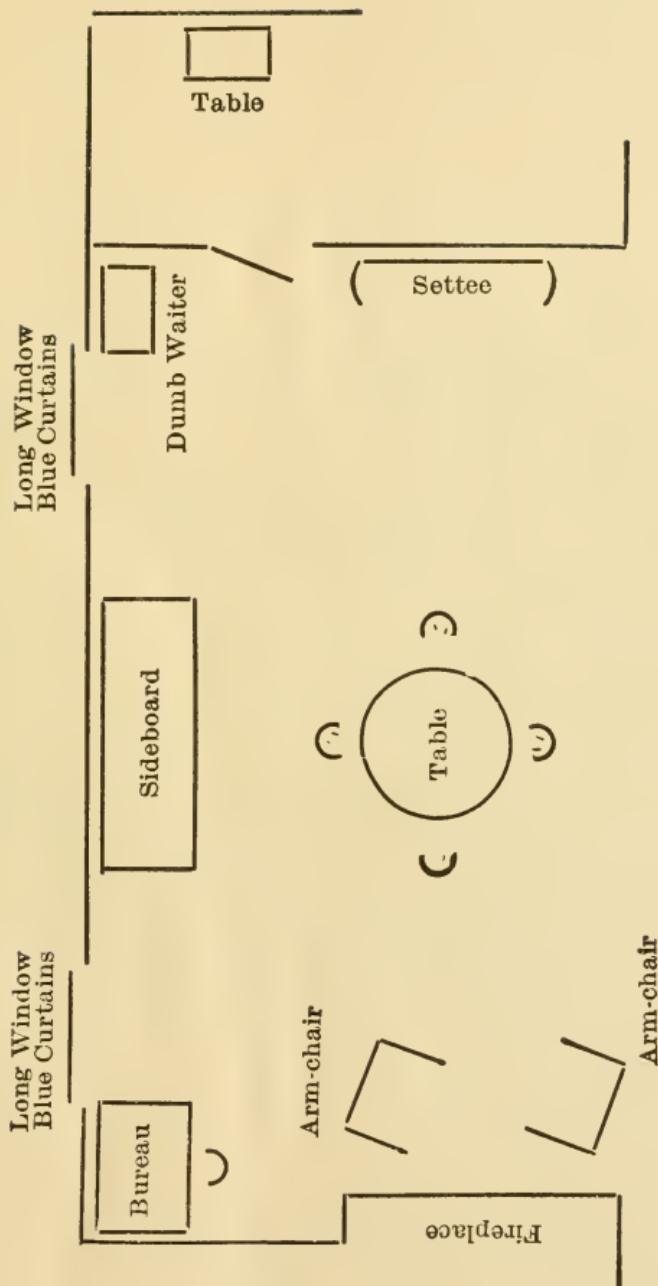
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THE FOURTH MAN.



THE FOURTH MAN

(AN ORIGINAL COMEDY IN ONE ACT)

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

GEORGE FINLAY, <i>a Solicitor.</i>	GORDON ASH.
JOHN CUNNINGHAM, <i>a Private School-</i> <i>master</i>	A. McLEAN.
CANON LAMB, <i>an Anglican Clergy-</i> <i>man</i>	ERNEST HAINES.
A WAITER AND THE HALL PORTER } Servants at the Cosmopolitan Hotel.	FRED OWEN. GRENDON BENTLEY.

SCENE.—*A Private Room in the Cosmopolitan Hotel.*

Produced by MR. DOUGLAS GORDON, Gaiety Theatre, Man-
chester, April 10, 1916.

THE FOURTH MAN

The curtain rises on a private sitting-room in the Cosmopolitan Hotel. There is a sideboard in the centre of the back wall. On either side of the side-board are windows. There is a fireplace in wall R. There is a door in wall L. Midway down stage is a dining-table, which has been cleared. On it remain glasses, finger bowls, dessert, and a decanter of port. At the table are four chairs.

The chair facing the audience is occupied by CANON LAMB, who is sleek, comfortable, self-satisfied, and well-groomed. The chair to the left of the table is filled by FINLAY, who is pleasant portly, and despite his profession, human to the core. The chair to the right of the table is occupied by CUNNINGHAM. Not less prosperous than the other two, he is leaner in body; less self-satisfied than CANON LAMB, he is infinitely more 'superior', and, like the clergyman, he has none of the strong sentiment in which the solicitor's warm-heartedness and humanity find vent.

The chair with its back to the audience is without an occupant. But it has before it finger bowl, dessert, plate and glass.

As the curtain rises, LAMB is peeling a peach.

LAMB. A fitting conclusion to an excellent dinner!

FINLAY. Just as much an epicure as ever. I remember how at school you always turned up your nose at jam roll. Nauseous, sticky stuff, you called it. But you generally cleared it up! (Turning to

CUNNINGHAM.) I hope you feed your boys well, Cunningham. Do you give 'em jam roll ?

LAMB. Of course he does. It pays to feed schoolboys well nowadays. In schools like his I might almost say it pays to over-feed 'em. Doesn't it, Cunningham?—what! Rich mothers like their boys richly fed.

CUNNINGHAM. Capital, Lamb!

LAMB. Jam roll is popular and cheap. So many things nowadays are popular and cheap! Well, as I was saying, they've dined us well. A wonderful hotel!

FINLAY. Wonderful! Eight hundred bedrooms. The Americans say it's the finest in the world—outside America.

LAMB. Pity we couldn't *all* come. I suppose there's no chance of Gilmour turning up.

FINLAY. I'm afraid not.

CUNNINGHAM. What was the last you heard of him?

FINLAY (*slowly and with feeling*). He was in Jo'-burg—holding horses' heads.

(LAMB nods sententiously. CUNNINGHAM looks his disgust. There is a pause, during which the waiter enters at door L.)

WAITER. Will you take coffee here or in the lounge, gentlemen?

LAMB. In here, please.

(WAITER goes out; shuts door.)

FINLAY (*jerkily, to cover his emotion*). I see Oxford are doing well. A Malvern boy got eighty odd. Caldicott his name is. I wonder if he was in our house.

CUNNINGHAM. Don't know.

LAMB. Nor I.

FINLAY. Don't either of you ever go down? Cunningham, what about you?

CUNNINGHAM. No—never. Too busy. Don't suppose I shall till my boy is old enough to go.

FINLAY. Same here. But I sometimes write to old Smugey, all the same. He was a good fellow. He did more than any man to help his boys.

(LAMB nods ; he glances at the empty chair.)

LAMB. D'you remember how fond old Smugey was of Gilmour ?

FINLAY. Yes. He was a good judge too. I think he could often see what boys would be as men.

LAMB. Often—generally—but not always. (*He laughs unctuously.*) I remember how he said we should become well-to-do men of the middle classes—but nothing more—because we lacked courage. Gilmour he always said would do better than any of us.

CUNNINGHAM (*in whose voice a certain faint self-satisfaction is apparent*). Instead of which he's right down in the gutter. What a fall for a man of pride !

FINLAY (*warmly*). If I could find him—with all the claims upon me—I would try and set him on his legs.

LAMB (*less warmly*). Yes—certainly.

CUNNINGHAM (*still less warmly*). Of course !

FINLAY. But we shan't have to do it. He won't be found—and he'd be too proud if he were.

LAMB (*nodding*). It is strange how some men go out unexpectedly—and how others hold their own. I suppose we *have* succeeded. Finlay, are you a success ?

FINLAY (*shrugging his shoulders*). I suppose so. I have the biggest practice in my little town—all the business worth having is in my hands. I can do nothing further. Only my expenses grow. I live up to my income—and the women set the pace ! I have to keep up appearances.

LAMB. And what about you, Cunningham ?

CUNNINGHAM. My school is very flourishing—but

the expenses are so heavy—and my wife likes the social side of things. So I cannot spare the money to expand. As Finlay says, *keeping up appearances keeps a man hard up.*

LAMB. Yes! It is something like that with me. It is this awful living up to appearances which makes us all so poor. Still, we owe it to our position.

CUNNINGHAM (*bitterly*). Appearances—curse 'em! That's just what it is.

(*The door opens. CUNNINGHAM stops abruptly. The WAITER enters with coffee, first to LAMB, second to FINLAY, third to CUNNINGHAM. He puts the cups down and goes out, closing door.*)

LAMB (*fingering his watch-chain*). By the way, have you fellows brought your crosses?

FINLAY (*feeling in pocket*). Yes, I have mine!

CUNNINGHAM. Here's mine. Do you remember that lame beggar who sold them to us in Brussels?

LAMB. Outside that *café* on fair night—rather!

CUNNINGHAM. Didn't he jabber! But he made us buy.

FINLAY. Made Gilmour buy, you mean. Gillie gave them to us as a memento of our holidays there together. It was he who so insisted on this meeting—and our bringing them—after twenty years. "Let's meet and compare notes when we've all got established in the world!" That's what he said, if you remember. And there and then we fixed up to meet here—twenty years from that day. And here we are. (FINLAY pauses. *He looks at the empty chair.*) I say, suppose we drink Gilmour's health?

LAMB. Certainly.

(*LAMB fills his glass and passes the decanter to CUNNINGHAM, who passes it to FINLAY in turn. Each man puts a little cross of black bogwood on the cloth.*)

FINLAY (*rising, and with enthusiasm*). Charlie Gilmour, alive or dead! One of the best!

(At this moment the WAITER enters. He comes in quietly and stands between FINLAY and LAMB, who do not at first notice him.)

LAMB (rising, and with less enthusiasm). Charlie Gilmour !

CUNNINGHAM (rising, and quite uninterested). Gil-mour !

(They all sit.)

WAITER. Gentlemen !

FINLAY (looking round). Yes. What's the mat-ter ?

WAITER (behind L. of table). Have any of you gentlemen lost anything ? Because I picked this up just now, outside the door.

(The WAITER extends his hand with the fingers open. In his palm lies a little black cross.)

FINLAY (taking cross and reading from it). Kermesse—Bruxelles—eighteen ninety-four ! (He stares at LAMB, who stares back.)

CUNNINGHAM. Thank—you—waiter. It does be-long to us.

(The WAITER bows and turns towards the door.)

LAMB (looking round). Waiter !

WAITER (turning). Yes, sir !

LAMB (looking at him keenly). Nothing !

WAITER. Yes, sir !

(The WAITER again goes towards the door.)

FINLAY (rising sharply). Waiter !

WAITER (again turning). Yes, sir !

FINLAY. Is your name Gilmour ?

WAITER. No, sir. Name of Perkins, sir.

(The WAITER goes out. The three men look at each other.)

FINLAY (shaken). It was absurd of me, I admit. (Sits again.) But for a moment, I thought . . .

LAMB. Yes, I thought the same thing. Somewhat the same height and build—the same age—and life alters some men terribly—if they have to rough it.

CUNNINGHAM. It would have been too horrible to have been waited upon this evening by some one who had been one of us.

LAMB. Thank God that isn't the explanation !

FINLAY (*pushing back his chair*). What is the explanation ?

CUNNINGHAM. I don't know.

LAMB (*taking cross from FINLAY*). It is Gilmour's cross. It is scratched and worn. But how it comes here, I cannot tell. Unless—unless . . .

CUNNINGHAM (*sharply*). Unless what, Lamb ?

LAMB (*awed*). Unless it means that Gilmour is dead !

CUNNINGHAM. You suggest a supernatural explanation—that the cross has come to us in some way that we can't explain ?

LAMB (*solemnly*). Yes, there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy.

FINLAY (*jumping up from his chair*). Stuff and nonsense ! You men are over educated. There's no far-fetched supernatural explanation to that cross coming here. You only read about that sort of mystery in books. The sort of mystery we are up against is an ordinary natural mystery. And I'm going to solve it.

(FINLAY goes towards the bell, R. below fire.)

CUNNINGHAM. Stop, Finlay !

LAMB. Let us be calm.

FINLAY. Don't say "let us be calm," Lamb, as if you were saying "let us pray." For God's sake let us be *sensible*. Gilmour is here—in this hotel, or near it. Perhaps he is selling newspapers on the pavement—outside. It is up to us to find out where he is—what he is doing—why he sent us his

cross ; possibly he daren't show himself.—No, don't start. I know enough of life in my profession to know that sometimes men have to lie low. I'm going to find out where he is and what he's doing, and if he needs help.

(FINLAY goes to bell and rings it, R. below fire.)

CUNNINGHAM. Stop ! Let us be careful. We don't want to implicate ourselves in anything disgraceful.

FINLAY (*still with his finger on the bell*). I'm not going to stop.

(*The WAITER enters. Comes up L.C.*)

FINLAY (*crosses to him, above table, speaking calmly—with an effort*). Waiter, we want to speak to you.

WAITER. Yes, sir.

FINLAY. These two gentlemen and I are not satisfied with the explanation which you gave us about finding that cross. You said you picked it up. But I don't think you did.

WAITER (*up L.C.*) I'm sorry, sir.

FINLAY. Never mind about being sorry.

WAITER. Well, sir, I thought it might belong to you. I picked it up:

FINLAY. I've already said I do not think you did pick it up. I see now by your manner, you didn't. That cross belonged to a gentleman whom we expected to dine with us. He has not turned up. As something which belongs to him has turned up—we want the matter explained. Now did you pick that cross up ?

WAITER. No, sir.

FINLAY. Exactly. Now go and ask whoever gave it you to come and see us at once.

WAITER. Yes, sir.

(*The WAITER goes out. FINLAY, triumphant, turns, crosses back to fire, and smiles.*)

LAMB. Upon my word, Finlay, you didn't lose much time in turning that man inside out.

FINLAY (*dryly*). It's never well to bother about supernatural explanations till you've exhausted all the natural ones.

CUNNINGHAM. Do you think Gilmour gave him the cross to give us.

FINLAY. I don't think anything—yet. All I know is that the waiter was acting under instructions.

LAMB (*almost twittering with excitement*). But it looks as if it must have been Gilmour.

FINLAY. All that is certain is that the man who gave him the cross is somewhere about. Otherwise he would not have gone to fetch him.

(*There is a knock at the door.*)

FINLAY. Come in !

(*The HALL PORTER enters, in uniform. He is wearing a peaked cap; he closes door.*)

HALL PORTER (L.C.). You sent for me, gentlemen ?

FINLAY (*up R. corner of table; deliberately*). Not exactly. I asked the waiter to ask some one who had given him something to give us,—to come and see us.

HALL PORTER. Yes. I gave him a small black cross to bring to you.

FINLAY. And you told him to tell a lie about picking it up. How did you come by that cross ?

(*The HALL PORTER does not answer.*)

CUNNINGHAM. Did some poor devil give it to you to send in to us ?

FINLAY (*suddenly*). Take off your cap. I cannot see your face.

(*The HALL PORTER takes off his cap and stands smiling and erect.*)

FINLAY (*fervently*). My God—it's Gilmour.

HALL PORTER (*holding out his hand*). How are you, Bunny? (*crosses to up R.C.*). (CUNNINGHAM and LAMB *rise*.)

FINLAY (*seizing the hand and shaking it*). Twenty per cent. better than I was five minutes ago. How are you Gillie, old man?

GILMOUR. First rate, thanks. (*Turning towards LAMB*) And you, padre, how are you?

LAMB (*above table, taking GILMOUR's hand after a momentary hesitation, and hiding his embarrassment under a bad joke*). How can one be feeling anything but fit after eating one of your excellent dinners!

GILMOUR (*to CUNNINGHAM R.C.*). And you, Ferret, how are you? Your digestion good also?

CUNNINGHAM (*R.C., taking GILMOUR's hand*). Feeling very fit, thanks, Gilmour. But why all this elaborate mystery?

GILMOUR. Well—you are what you are and I am what I am. It occurred to me to test you.

CUNNINGHAM. To test us, Gilmour.

GILMOUR. Yes—to test you. I saw you come in—and you were just what I expected—Lamb here, the perfect parson (*LAMB drops to L. of table*), you the prosperous society Schoolmaster: Finlay—as he always was—more human than either of you . . . and I'm the Hall Porter of this hotel.

CUNNINGHAM. The Hall Porter!

GILMOUR (*glancing at his uniform*). What else! So I sent in my cross with an obvious lie. I told myself that if you swallowed the lie and took no trouble to find me, it would not be worth my while to meet you again—but that if you sought me out it would be different. Well, you have sought me out—and here I am.

CUNNINGHAM. It's very nice to see you again, Gilmour; but can't you get out of those things before you join us.

FINLAY. Damn it all, Cunningham, what's it matter what he's wearing—so long as he's here.

LAMB (*to FINLAY*). S—sh—sh.

GILMOUR (*smiling*). Why certainly, Cunningham. I'm off duty—it won't take me two minutes to change.

(*GILMOUR goes out and shuts door. The three men look at each other. FINLAY goes over to the fireplace and looks down into the empty grate. CUNNINGHAM goes to the table and picks up an apple and plays catch with it. LAMB pours out a glass of port, which he drains.*)

LAMB (*seated L. of table, setting glass back on table*). Poor fellow, he has come down.

CUNNINGHAM (*sits below table, facing FINLAY*). If it were in the colonies—but in England—at an English hotel.

LAMB. I wonder if he has ever been recognized by any one who was at school with him. Or does he always wear his peaked cap. It's a pretty good disguise.

CUNNINGHAM. The whole business is pretty dreadful, whichever way you look at it.

FINLAY (*wheeling round*). What is so—*dreadful*?

CUNNINGHAM. That Gilmour should be in a menial position.

FINLAY. It doesn't seem to oppress him.

LAMB (*ponderously*). That is a very bad sign. It shows he is dead to any sense of shame.

CUNNINGHAM. Just so.

FINLAY. Very well then. What are we going to do towards getting him out of his menial position?

LAMB (*worried*). I don't quite see what we *can* do. He doesn't seem to mind. I repeat, he has no sense of shame.

CUNNINGHAM. It's very difficult. Once a man loses his self-respect it's dreadfully hard to call it back again.

FINLAY (*a step forward*). You are not answering

my question. What are we going to do to help him ? I will put down fifty pounds—as a start.

(LAMB and CUNNINGHAM look at each other. Their faces fall.)

LAMB. I can't afford as much as fifty. I'm not a rich man, Finlay. If you had said five pounds, I could have managed it—without telling my wife. You must remember we've appearances to keep up—

FINLAY (*crosses to top R. corner of table, half amused, half disgusted*). Hang it all, padre—make it a tenner.

LAMB. Well, if I do the poor in my parish will have to do without something.

FINLAY (*comes down R.C.*). Don't put it like that. Still, all the same, I hold you to the tenner. Now, Cunningham, what about you ? Sixty so far ! Make it up to a hundred !

CUNNINGHAM (*aghast*). A hundred ! My dear fellow, school-mastering isn't a gold mine !

FINLAY Still it's a very paying game—in your line of it.

CUNNINGHAM. You forget the heavy expenses I have. If I tried to save money, people would think I was poor—and therefore no good at my business.

FINLAY. Don't make excuses, Cunningham. You've already told us you are prosperous. How much are you good for—for Gilmour ?

CUNNINGHAM. Are you sure we are going on the right lines, Finlay ? Wouldn't it be better to try and get him some sort of a respectable job—secretary to some society or something ?

FINLAY. We are going to do that as well. What I want to get at is—what we can offer him—supposing, shall we say, he's in debt or wants a bit of capital.

CUNNINGHAM. We may be throwing good money into the gutter.

FINLAY. On the other hand we may not.

CUNNINGHAM. Let us wait and see exactly how things are with him.

FINLAY (*crosses back to fire*). If you don't want to give anything, Cunningham, say so.

CUNNINGHAM (*reluctantly*). Put me down for the same as Lamb.

FINLAY. Well—now we know where we are.

(*At that moment GILMOUR enters again. He is dressed in a well-cut tweed suit, and looks a younger, brisker, and altogether more vigorous man than any of the other three. There is a moment's constrained silence. GILMOUR breaks it easily and naturally by going up to FINLAY and putting a hand on his shoulder.*)

GILMOUR (*crosses over to R.*). Well, Bunny, how's life?

FINLAY (*looking up*). Gillie, old man, we're jolly glad to see you—aren't we, you two?

LAMB } (*together without much enthusiasm*).

CUNNINGHAM } Rather!

GILMOUR. You're all flourishing I see.

LAMB. What makes you think that?

GILMOUR. Oh, you have the air of it. You look intensely professional and respectable—as I always knew you would. I'm only a failure.

LAMB (*after an awkward pause*). Gillie!

GILMOUR. Yes, padre.

LAMB. We're awfully sorry.

GILMOUR. Sorry! What for?

CUNNINGHAM. That you have had to take a job like yours here.

FINLAY. We would like to help you—if you would let us. We are fairly well-to-do-men.

GILMOUR (*embarrassed*). I don't quite understand . . .

LAMB (*blurting it out*). We mean—well, while you were changing, Finlay said he was good for fifty pounds—and Cunningham and I would help also—if a small sum of money would get you out of this and start you in something—more suitable.

GILMOUR (*moved*). Finlay started a whip up for me—and you two joined in !

CUNNINGHAM. Yes—that's it—and if we could get you a clerkship or a secretaryship—well, we would.

GILMOUR. And you, Bunny, put down fifty pounds !

FINLAY. That's nothing——

GILMOUR. And you, Lamb—and you, Ferret ! There's no necessity. I'm quite satisfied with my job.

LAMB. Satisfied ! You've lost your sense of proportion, Gilmour. It isn't good enough for a man of your birth and education.

GILMOUR. Not good enough. It's quite as good as a clerkship or a secretaryship. I don't want to change.

CUNNINGHAM (*shocked*). You ought to want. You ought to try to succeed. You're only forty-five. You' might redeem yourself yet.

FINLAY. We want to help you to succeed as you ought to succeed.

GILMOUR. But I have succeeded. After the smash of my father's business I went out to South Africa. I touched bottom. But I won through and I have fought my way up. I'm doing quite well.

CUNNINGHAM. As a Hall Porter ?

GILMOUR. Yes—as a Hall Porter.

FINLAY. What do they pay you, Gillie ?

GILMOUR. Five shillings a week.

LAMB (*shocked*). What ?

CUNNINGHAM. That's nominal, of course. It's the tips which make up your real salary I suppose !

GILMOUR. Yes—they mount up. You see this hotel has eight hundred bedrooms. We are always full. More than two hundred people leave every day. Nobody gives me less than a shilling—many give me half a crown.

(*The three men stare at him. Each is doing a mental calculation. CUNNINGHAM gets the answer first.*)

CUNNINGHAM. An average of four hundred shillings—that's twenty pounds a day.

LAMB (*producing pencil and calculating on table*). Man alive—you're making seven thousand pounds a year.

GILMOUR (*deprecatingly*). Ah—not so much as that. You see, I've several assistants as well. But my clear personal takings in any one year have never been less than three thousand pounds.

FINLAY (*warmly*). Splendid, Gillie !

CUNNINGHAM (*enviously*). Then you're richer than any of us—we—none of us make half that—net.

GILMOUR. Yes. I suppose I am very fortunate.

LAMB. Fortunate ! I should think you *are* fortunate. How did you get the post ?

GILMOUR. The Manager knew me in South Africa. I was barman at a Jo'burg Hotel. We worked it up and he sold it. Then he came home and got this.

FINLAY. And he asks no percentage !

GILMOUR. Of course not. Why should he. He knows that I am worth what I make. He tells me I have a personality which pleases people and makes them feel at home as soon as they pass the door. I suppose he's right, too—or I shouldn't have so many friends. Some of them come to see me for weekends at Sevenoaks, where I've a little house.

FINLAY. And your wife is still alive ?

GILMOUR. Yes. Thank God—she's stuck to me like a brick.

CUNNINGHAM (*wonderingly*). And she doesn't mind !

GILMOUR. Mind. Why should she mind ? She isn't that sort. You see, she is a niece of Lord Granston's. She hasn't any social ambitions. She just is—

(*There is a pause. The three men look at GILMOUR without speaking. They have become aware that he has gained something not merely concerned with money, which they have completely missed.*)

CUNNINGHAM. You said you lived at Sevenoaks. But that is twenty miles away. Do you go out every night by train.

GILMOUR. No, by car.

CUNNINGHAM.)
LAMB. } By car !
FINLAY.

GILMOUR. Yes—it's outside, waiting for me. I must be getting off immediately. Remember it's Saturday night.

(He pauses, hesitates, looks at his three old school-fellows, and is obviously weighing them up. Then he turns sharply to FINLAY.)

GILMOUR. Bunny, old man !

FINLAY (at fire). Yes. Gillie.

GILMOUR. You've got to come along for the weekend. I'm not going to let you say no ! (He crooks his arm within FINLAY'S, then puts out a hand.) By-bye, Cunningham. Doubtless we shall meet again !

GILMOUR (crosses to fire) (shakes hands with CUNNINGHAM and LAMB, who does not meet his eyes. LAMB gives a nervous little laugh.)

LAMB (rising). Good-bye, Gillie—glad to see you so flourishing. I believe you're the luckiest of us all.

GILMOUR (still with his arm crooked in FINLAY'S and speaking slowly, deliberately; emphasizing his words). Lucky ! I should say I was lucky. I'm the happiest man in the world. I like my job—I live quietly—and I've no appearances to keep up !

(Exit GILMOUR with FINLAY.)

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